



Grass to Cash

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Spring Grazing Objectives

Why?

Get calved cows out to grass as early as possible

- Increased animal performance - high quality diet with minimal supplements
- Recondition swards for the year ahead – stimulate growth and improve quality
- Maximise spring grass utilisation & minimise sward decay
- Reduce workload on the farm

Each extra day at grass = €2.70/cow/day

How?

Early Grazing Effects on Sward Characteristics

Early grazed sward



Late grazed sward



Early grazing – Why not?

1. Cows will poach paddocks
2. I will run out of Grass



Spring Grazing Ballyhaise

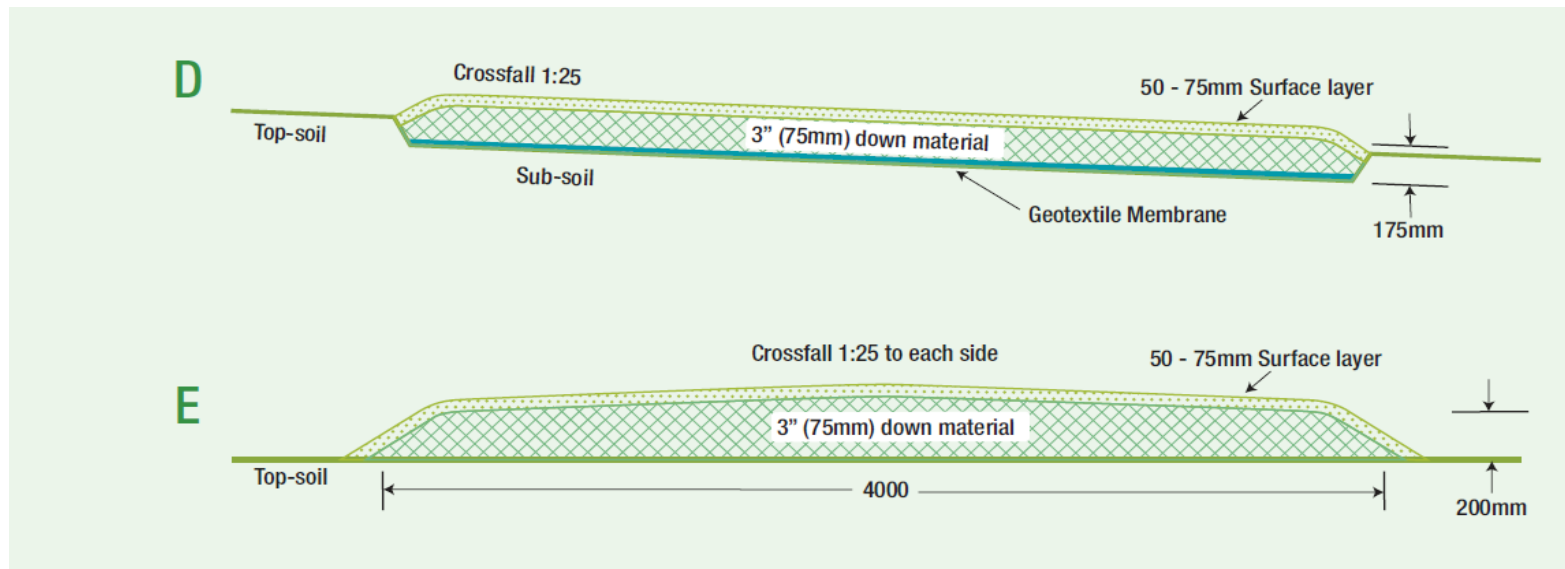
- Out on Feb 9th
- 31% grazed By the 7th of March
- 9th Feb to 9th March = 29 days (58 possible grazings)

Year	Grazings achieved
2016	40
2015	47
2014	32
2013	42
Average	40

How do we avoid poaching?

Grazing Infrastructure

- Roads – Dry, good surface, design for cows
- Fencing – simple and flexible
- Water – troughs placed centrally
- Paddock Audit



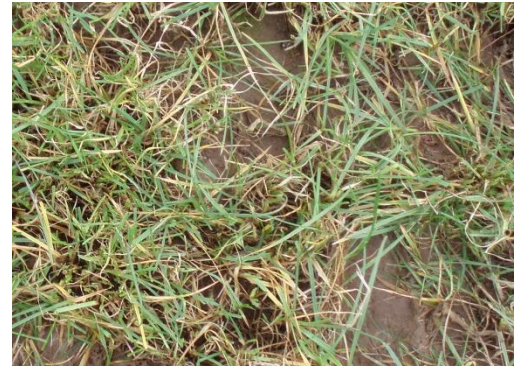
How do we avoid poaching?

Grazing Management

- Accurate allocation of grass (Square blocks)
- Accurate allocation of other supplements
- On-off Grazing

Attitude

- Flexible
- Be prepared to make mistakes!









- Grazing a relatively heavy cover
- Damp underfoot
- Allocated large area and removed after 4 hours
- Residual too high as a result
- **Too cautious- Do not allocate more than herd appetite to avoid damage- allocate enough and move on in time**



- Good efforts with 2 larger herds
- Multiple access points and square blocks
- Attention to detail on allocations- winter milk herd (right) adjusting night silage feeding to account for grazing
- Hoof marks 3-5cm in both cases- acceptable
- ***Monitor % farm grazed and make sure to increase grass allowance in line with rising herd demand***

- Had only 10% of farm grazed by end of last week and made decision to catch up
- Pre-grazing was 1200kg here approx. (plus 4kg meal)
- Allocated 20% more area to avoid damage but left cows in paddock 7 hours daytime
 - Herd 'bunched together' when moving off
- Quite significant level of damage across paddock
- ***Grazing techniques!- Limit access time to 4 hours max, do not over-allocate area, square blocks***
- ***Start grazing some lower covers to catch up area***
- ***In many cases, the reaction to ground damage like this is to re-house cows fulltime. However, the reaction here should instead be to improve skills/understanding of day-to-day grazing mgmt.***

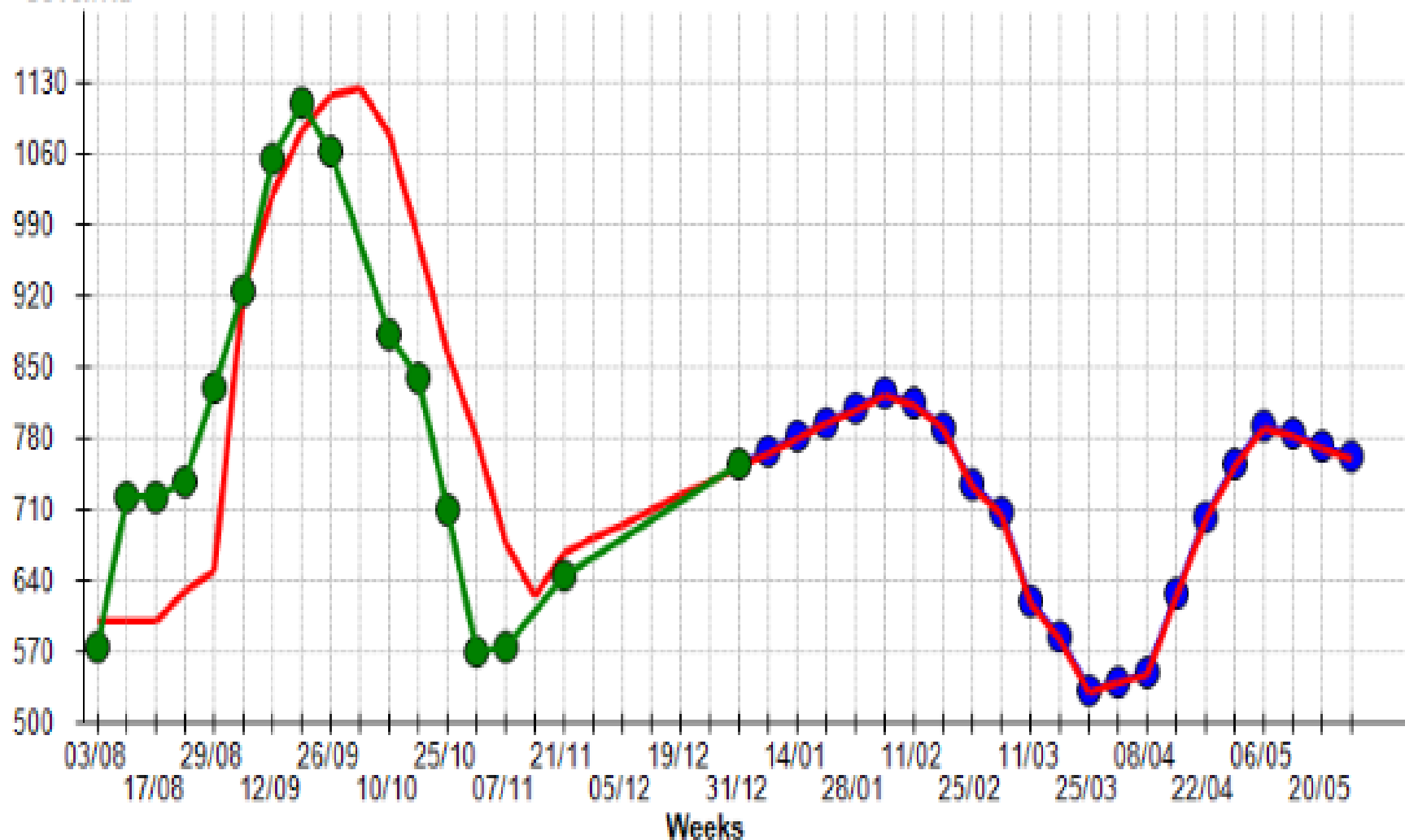
How Do We Keep Grass in Diet?

- 1. Grass Budget and Weekly Walk**
- 2. Spring Rotation Planner**
- 3. Spring N Application**

Name: Autumn Budget (Copy) (Copy) (Copy)
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Measured Projected Target

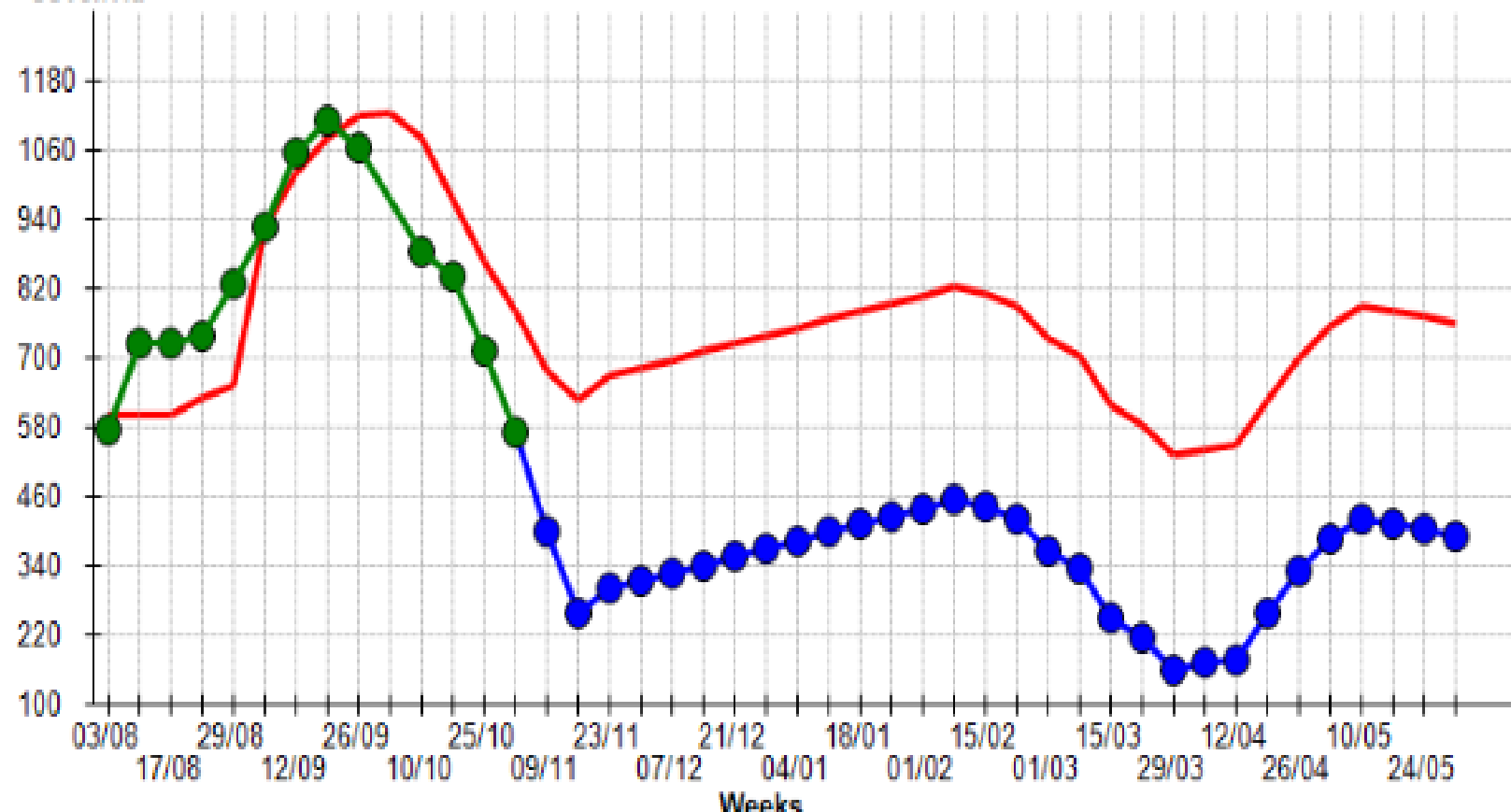
Cover/Ha



Name: Autumn Budget (Copy) (Copy) (Copy)
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Measured Projected Target

Cover/Ha



Using the Spring Rotation Plan (SRP)

Example SRP for a 40 ha dairy farm with 100 dairy cows

Week	Rotation (days)	Daily area (ha/day)	Total area grazed by week end (%)
10 th to 16 th Feb	100	0.4	7
24 th Feb to 2 nd March	82	0.48	23
3 rd to 9 th March	73	0.55	32
17 th to 24 th Mar	56	0.70	56
31 st March to 6 th April	38	1.0	87
7 th to 13 th April	21	1.3	100

For the plan to be successful

- Stick to the planned area
- Post-grazing residual 3.5cm
- Use a strip wire on a 12-hour basis.
- Grazing area should be back fenced
- On/Off grazing is essential in wet weather.

Spring N Application

- ½ bag of urea early Feb
- Slurry paddocks with low covers
- Full bag of urea mid March
- 70 units on by 1st April
- 10kg DM of grass per kg of N
- Lower response to N in spring but more valuable grass

Key dates for Grassland Management

- 15th Aug – start building cover
- 26th Sept – Start closing paddocks
- 1st Nov – 70% closed
- 15th Feb Turnout
- 7th March – 30% grazed
- 15th April – finished first round



Key Take Home Messages

- Invest in grazing infrastructure – Borrow if necessary?
- Learn the skills – allocation + measurement
- Have a plan and stick to it
- Amend the plan for next year if needed.

